DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 315 605 CE 054 144

AUTHOR Olivier, Peggy; And Others
TITLE Educational Excellence through Career-Vocational Education. Introduction, Goals, and Outcomes.
PUB DATE Dec 89
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the American Vocational Association Convention (Orlando, FL, December 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Persistence; *Career Education; *Dropout Prevention; Dropout Programs; Dropouts; *High Risk Students; *Integrated Curriculum; *School Holding Power; Secondary Education; *Special Needs Students; State Curriculum Guides
IDENTIFIERS *California

ABSTRACT

The Special Needs Unit of the Career-Vocational Education Division, California State Department of Education, began sponsoring a secondary school project in 1985 to combat California's high dropout rate. Eight secondary school sites in six districts were selected to develop schoolwide, integrated, career-oriented curriculum that would use the State Model Curriculum Standards and Frameworks for both academic and vocational subject areas. Technical assistance, guidance, and inservice workshops were provided by personnel from the University of California and the State Department of Education. School philosophies changed, curriculum review occurred in all areas, and business and industry and other community representatives became more involved in local education. Each school's main emphasis was to improve career-vocational education programs for disadvantaged students, although school personnel accurately anticipated that this would also benefit all students. Project personnel expected that by improving academic and career preparation, students would remain in school and thereby attain sufficient skills for higher education, employment, personal growth, citizenship, and ethical development. These expectations were met best at the schools that completed most of 42 project objectives and are evidenced by statistics such as the following from one school: (1) dropout rates decreased from 16 percent to 11 percent; (2) attendance rates increased by 1.8 percent; (3) teen pregnancies decreased by 50 percent; and (4) suspension days decreased by 84 percent. High school came to be viewed as a preparation for careers either at the completion of high school or through further education. (CML)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED315605

Educational Excellence

Through

Career-Vocational Education

Introduction, Goals, and Outcomes

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

W E Emo

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Impact
PROGRAMS

Peggy Olivier, California State Department of Education
Barbara Nemko, Ph.D., University of California, Davis
Wendy Emo, University of California, Davis

CE054144

Educational Excellence
Through Career-Vocational Education

Executive Summary

In an effort to combat California's high dropout rate, the Special Needs Unit of the Career-Vocational Education Division of the State Department of Education began sponsoring the Educational Excellence Through Career-Vocational Education project in 1985. Eight secondary school sites in six districts were challenged to develop school-wide, integrated, career-oriented curriculum which would utilize the State Model Curriculum Standards and Frameworks for both academic and vocational subject areas. With technical assistance, guidance, and inservice workshops provided by personnel from the University of California and the State Department of Education, school philosophies changed, curriculum review occurred in all areas, and business/industry and other community representatives became more involved in local education.

Each school's main emphasis was to improve career-vocational education programs for disadvantaged students, although school personnel accurately anticipated that this would also benefit all students. Project personnel expected that by improving academic/career preparation, students would remain in school and thereby attain sufficient skills to be prepared for higher education, employment, personal growth, citizenship, and ethical development.

These expectations were met best at the schools which completed most of 42 project objectives and are evidenced by the following statistics from one school: dropout rates decreased from 16% to 11%, attendance rates increased by 1.8%, teen pregnancies decreased by 50%, and suspension days decreased by 84%. In addition, vocational and academic faculty members collaborated on developing a wide variety of courses which met graduation requirements while at the same time taught employability skills. High school became viewed as a preparation for careers either at the completion of high school or through further education.

One of the most unusual changes in the schools is that students identify career interests and align them with flexible career paths, thus creating academic/career plans which meet students' goals and thus gives purpose and reason to attending school. Practices which the successful project schools have instituted insure that when students graduate they will be prepared to enter the workforce directly or continue their education at a technical school or at a two- or four-year college or university. These and other outstanding innovations, changes, additions, and modifications have occurred at the eight sites over the course of the project and are described in the following pages.

Educational Excellence Through Career-Vocational Education

Introduction

With 28% of California's children dropping out of school before graduation from 12th grade (up to 55% in some urban schools), there has been much concern over the public school system and its apparent lack of effectiveness. The highest proportion of dropouts in this state, as reported by the Office of Research of the California Assembly, is comprised of youth from low-income families who, in addition to their economic problems, are frequently academically disadvantaged as well; that is, they have reading, math, or communication deficits that prevent them from succeeding in school. Many organizations are working toward changing parts of the school system in order to help our young people, and many approaches have been attempted. The situation is spawning a cadre of individuals who have extensively studied the problems and proposed school program alterations.

Recently the National Center for Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE) sponsored a teleconference titled "Integrating Academic and Vocational Studies." Norton Grubb, NCRVE Director and panel moderator, was asked "Can this integration be furthered in the typical comprehensive high school with its present structure or is fundamental change in its structure necessary?" He replied by telling of a model "that I have been very impressed with that I have seen two examples of in California." He then described the Career Path matrix of Woodland High School, Woodland, California, and the Career Magnet School-Within -A-School concept of Royal High School, Simi Valley, California.

At the same teleconference, Jeanne Oakes, Site Director, NCRVE with Rand Corporation, stated that research indicates that integrating academic and vocational studies may provide a work force second to none and may be a promising way to provide better-educated citizens generally.

Jay Smink, Director, National Dropout Prevention Center, agrees that integrating "occupational skills with basic academic skills" is an essential area in which future efforts in dropout prevention will be directed (National Dropout Prevention Newsletter, Fall, 1989).

John Bishop of Cornell University recommends that schools make the following changes (Working Together, Spring 1989):

- improve occupational counseling
- expand employer/school relations
- strengthen basic skills foundations
- honor achievements
- use competency profiles
- help students obtain good jobs
- restructure state funding formulas to promote effective service to the disadvantaged

Dr. Bonnie Guiton (Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education) stated that we can "no longer rely on American manufacturing to offer a stable employment place for minimally skilled workers." She went on say that "the vocational education programs most successful in meeting the needs of diverse students have two basic characteristics. The first is private sector partnerships. . . . The second . . . is a strong marketplace adaptability. . . (which) incorporate(s) a set of fundamental basic skills that allows students to move successfully beyond their first jobs" (Vocational Education Journal, Jan. 1988, p. 21).

House and Senate bills for the reauthorizing Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act (HR 7 and S 1109) have included amendments which have been part of the Educational Excellence project objectives. The bills require vocational education (or Applied Technology Education programs, according to HR 7) to integrate academic and vocational studies and to promote business/industry linkages. Populations to be served would include the economically disadvantaged, handicapped, limited English proficient, and programs to achieve sex equity. Priority in the use of these funds must be given to:

> integration of academic and vocational training in the context of sequential courses utilizing applied academics;
>
> program improvement, including purchase of state-of-the-art equipment, the provision of comprehensive guidance and counseling to each student by age 14 or grade 10;
>
> the appointment by each LEA or AVS of a counselor or teacher to ensure that special populations are receiving adequate services.

Background

With dropout prevention information and ideas abounding, the California State Department of Education has been seeking ways to revitalize the education so that students will remain in school and attain sufficient skills to be prepared for employment, personal growth, citizenship, and ethical development. One such effort is the Educational Excellence Through Career-Vocational Education project. This project, begun in 1985 by the Special Needs Unit of the Career-Vocational Preparation Division, is based on the following three premises which encompass the concerns and suggestions of dropout prevention experts and the Perkins Act reauthorization mandates:

> Career-vocational education programs are an effective strategy to meet the needs and career goals of a significant number of students.
>
> Career-vocational education is a catalyst that can generate student interest, motivate them to remain in school, and prepare them for success in productive employment and/or higher education.
>
> Career-vocational education must become an integral component within the comprehensive high school and be an effective instructional strategy for students to achieve and reinforce core academic skills necessary for success in career fields or higher education.

In the fall of 1985, eight comprehensive high schools throughout California were selected to participate as "model" sites within the Educational Excellence project. The criteria were a willingness and interest in participating, commitment to developing quality comprehensive guidance programs and services, desire to improve the quality and access of their career-vocational preparation programs and services to disadvantaged students, and the state's effort to achieve a geographic balance among the sites.

Each site independently developed a multi-year comprehensive plan for site improvement of all programs and services. While the purpose of this effort was to develop a site plan which could be used as a vehicle to improve career-vocational preparation programs and services for the disadvantaged, it was evident that much of this planning would also have positive benefits for all students. All sites made the following commitments before beginning their planning:

The development of a school philosophy focused on meeting the career needs of all students. All students need to acquire an understanding of career opportunities, whether they plan to enter the work world directly following high school or after postsecondary In today's rapidly changing technological society, students need to develop a foundation for career planning and lifelong learning.

The development of a comprehensive program of career guidance. If students are to make meaningful career choices, they must have an understanding of their own interests, skills and abilities, an understanding of the labor market, and the ability to formulate an individual plan to achieve their goals. The school guidance program, therefore, should include a total vocational assessment of each student, as well as components which address the student's personal, social, educational and career development.

The integration of career-vocational preparation as an instructional strategy to help teach and/or reinforce the core academic curriculum. All students need to acquire a solid foundation in academic skills. Career-vocational preparation, given its emphasis on the practical and its ability to relate abstract concepts to "hands on" activity, provides an invaluable link between the classroom and the real world. Through the infusion of career-vocational preparation strategies in academic classes, students can see how principles of math, science, and English are applied in the workplace, and understand the necessity of mastering academic skills.

Curriculum review must occur in all subject areas. Every subject matter instructional program must be evaluated and improved where necessary. The curriculum should be assessed against the State Department of Education Model Curriculum Frameworks, including the Model Curriculum Standards and Frameworks in Vocational Education, the Secondary School Program Quality Criteria, and the Model General Occupational/ Employability Skills, as well as against other pertinent criteria.

A commitment to involving the community, district office, school board and local business/industry representatives in developing a plan for improvement. The issues facing public high schools cannot be solved by school staff alone. Community, business, and industry leaders need to be involved in evaluating the needs of the school site and assist in developing a plan to address those needs. District office cooperation is needed if funds are to be targeted to each school site, and if available, categorical and noncategorical funds are to be coordinated for maximum impact. Finally, the school board needs to be aware of, support, and approve any plan for improvement of a school within their jurisdiction.

Dedication to continued planning and leadership development. It is unrealistic to think that the challenges facing education today can be remedied in one year. Institutionalizing educational change is a multi-year process. Each site's plans scheduled improvements to be made over three years.

Technical Assistance

Project directors realized that the sites would need technical assistance in their activities, so inservices were organized and numerous meetings were held to help the site coordinators. The sites were given a list of 42 objectives that their specific plans should encompass, and facilitators from the Vocational Education Resource System (VERS) assisted them. Complete descriptions of the inservices provided is chronicled in "Project Inservice Activities." The objectives, listed both there and in the appendix to this document, were divided into four major components: comprehensive guidance program, instructional program, parent-community involvement in school, and leadership-staff development.

Project Outcomes

As early as the end of the project's first year, 1986-7, significant project impacts were observed by an independent third party evaluator. These included:

Raising school staff awareness of career and vocational education
Providing a means for closer working relations between vocational and non-vocational teachers
Generating initial or continued development of a comprehensive guidance program
Initiating curriculum review procedures
Involving counselors with teachers and curriculum

At the end of the project's third year, the final year of funding, participating site coordinators noted varied outcomes, based on their individual plans, school philosophies, district size, site personnel, and degree of achievement of the 42 objectives. Personnel at project sites which completed most of the 42 objectives and altered the structure of their school for both students and faculty noticed the following significant changes at their schools:

decreased
- dropout rate
- teen pregnancies
- suspension days

increased
- attendance
- vocational course offerings and enrollments
- academic achievement
- vocational faculty members' self-esteem
- school and community awareness of vocational education
- business and industry participation in schools

Program alterations occured in all sites and included items within the four overall objective areas: guidance, instructional program, parent-community involvement, and leadership/staff development. Some of these changes are:

Guidance

Career Education curriculum
Career Infusion workshops
Career Paths and Career Plans
Comprehensive guidance plans
Computerized four-year plans for each student
Computerized guidance systems, including job/college search software
Counselor-to-student ratios reduced
Evening Tutorial Center
Job Developer staff position
Peer counseling
Pre-employment and work maturity skills
Regular counseling interviews with each student (once or twice yearly)
Teacher-to-Student Advisory program
Teen Assistance Support Center (community health programs brought on campus)

Instructional Program

2+2 program in which universities and community colleges allow credit for both academic and vocational high school courses
Academic graduation credit granted for over 30 vocational courses
Accelerated Learning program for high risk students
Alignment of all courses with state Model Curriculum Standards
Articulation with feeder schools
Learning Resource Centers which give both out-of-class personalized assistance to students and in-class presentations on study/writing topics
More than fifteen courses added to school programs
Restructuring by career paths rather than by traditional subject areas
Students use up-to-date instructional tools acquired through project funding, corporate donations, and other business-education partnerships
Teachers provide connections between subject matter and career application

Parent-Community Involvement

Adopt-a-Program liaison with businesses
Adopt-a-Student liaison with businesses
Business and Education Together program
Civil Service after-school program
Community network
Community Service class
Parent involvement programs
Parenting education programs

Leadership-Staff Development

Character education curriculum and newsletters
Desktop Publishing
Integration of critical thinking and decision-making into classes
Infusion of language arts and mathematics across the curriculum
Staff development in basic skills
Speakers' Bureau

The school has a process to measure progress being made on each objective.

Site administration and staff are willing to visit other sites and adopt/adapt techniques and make other changes that will improve the efforts of the site.

Site personnel are willing to share concerns and questions in an 'open management' style.

Good articulation exists with feeder schools and postsecondary schools.

Vocational courses have been revised and accepted as alternatives to mandated graduation requirements.

All teachers discuss career plans with their students and organize activities to help them better define those plans. In all classes, student activities are related to career choices.

Parents are an active part of the planning process and participate in project activities.

Potential Problems in Implementation

Both internal and external project reviewers have noted factors which slowed achievement of the Educational Excellence objectives. Some of these are:

a district office which questions funding
a district office which has sole responsibility for curriculum alignment and revision
change of staff in leadership roles
staff unaware of or uncommitted to the philosophy and objectives of the project
non-cooperative planning efforts
limited use of the project steering committee
project activities not operated as a joint responsibility
funding delays
limited opportunity for enrollment in career-vocational classes

Indicators of Success

Many of the indicators of success do not require special funding to implement. Some are philosophical and others only require a reorganization of activities that already occur. As a result of observing and evaluating the eight model sites, there appear to be a number of characteristics present at sites which have demonstrated the greatest progress toward achieving their goals. These characteristics include, but are not limited to:

There is a strong belief that students must leave high school with a career direction and that the project is a means of changing or improving student success.

The site has a supportive, enthusiastic principal who views career-vocational preparation as an effective instructional strategy, articulates that clearly, and demonstrates the leadership ability to get teachers, counselors, and students working cooperatively for the achievement of student career goals.

Consistency of personnel from year to year who demonstrate an understanding of the goals and objectives of the project.

The project objectives are consistent with school goals.

The site plan for improvement is specific and details the primary activities to be accomplished under each objective.

The school is organized in career clusters with academic and vocational teachers and counselors assigned to one or more clusters. Career-vocational education is the focus of the school. Staff meetings are organized across disciplines, with career-vocational clusters as the focus.

The staff is informed and involved regarding the specific purpose of the project and the activities to be accomplished.

There is an active school site project steering committee.

The district office staff is involved and supportive, and the school board is willing to provide financial support.

Counselor-to-student ratios are reduced.

Someone is assigned the lead responsibility to translate project objectives into primary activities, coordinate the project activities and is given adequate time to work with and encourage staff to meet the timelines and intent of the project.

Students receive integrated academic and career counseling and view career-vocational education as a positive step in the attainment of their career goals.

The site coordinator, job developer, or career center specialist involves the business community and various community services in achieving project objectives. This person also works to bridge the outside business community with students.

The site has a process for disseminating the information from inservice workshops to the rest of the faculty.

Dissemination Activities

Site Visits

Royal, March 8, 1989
Woodland, April 26, 1989
Duncan, October 18, 1989
Woodland, December 6, 1989
Royal, January 11, 1990

Spring 1990 Site Visits

Duncan, April 24, 1990
Royal - to be announced
Woodland - to be announced

Conference Presentations

TIDE/IMPACT Conference, Studio City (March 9-10, 1989)
CAVA-CAROC/P, Fresno (10/20/89)
California School Counselors Association, Ontario (10/27/89)
California Career Conference, Sacramento (11/1/89)
American Vocational Association, Orlando, Fla. (12/3-5/89)
Industrial Education, San Luis Obispo (12/7/89)

Possible Dissemination Activities for 1990

National Dropout Prevention Conference, Nashville (3/90)
TIDE/IMPACT Conference, Oakland (3/90)
Migrant Education Parent Conference, Garden Grove (3/90)
California Vocational Education Conference, Anaheim (4/90)
Region V Special Needs Conference, Portland (4/90)
Association of California School Administrators Conference, Santa Clara (4/90)
California School Boards Association Conference (fall 90)

Funding Sources

Schools are using a variety of funding sources for activities related to the Educational Excellence project. These come from:

Title I
Chapter II
JTPA
Lottery
GAIN
School Improvement
Vocational Education
various grants and other agencies
block funding

Once a school has developed a plan of action, grants may be sought to fund specific aspects of the plan.

Summary

The alarming dropout rate in high schools can be addressed by making school more meaningful to students through the changes initiated by the Educational Excellence project. Those in dropout prevention research recommend, among other things, improving occupational counseling as a fundamental school change. The Educational Excellence project initiated occupational counseling improvements as well as changes in school philosophies, curriculum review, and increased involvement of business and community representatives in the schools.

Project school personnel began the changes intending to improve their schools, especially for disadvantaged students. Alterations in school programs have proved beneficial for entire student bodies, since students in project schools now identify their career interests and align them to flexible career paths. Students thus create academic/career plans which meet their goals and give them purpose in attending school. In addition, academic and vocational teachers collaborate on developing a wide variety of courses which meet graduation requirements while at the same time teach employability skills. The practices which the project schools have instituted help insure that students graduate from high school with preparation for employment or further education.

Further Information

Further information regarding this project is available upon request from:

Wendy Emo, Coordinator
Educational Excellence Through Career-Vocational Educati
Agricultural and Career-Vocational EducationProjects
260 Russell Blvd., Suite A
Davis, CA 95616

Assistance in implementing/adapting aspects of this project is available from the Education Excellence project, the Vocational Education Resource System, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, the California Writing Project, and the following individuals:

Peggy Olivier/Nona Verloo
Consultants
Special Needs Unit
Career-Vocational Education Division
State Department of Education
1919 21st Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-6877
(916) 327-2159/2160

Jim Becket, Ph. D.
Coordinating Consultant
Career Concepts
2115 Catalina Dr.
Davis, CA 95616
(916) 756-1480

Barbara Nemko, Ph. D.
Project Director
Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences
University of California
Davis, CA 95616
(916) 752-7039

Tony Apolloni, Ph. D.
Project Director
Vocational Education Resource System
California Institute on Human Services
Sonoma State University
1801 East Cotati Avenue
Rohnert Park, CA 94928
(707) 664-2416